

## Foreword

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# Foreword

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This collection of essays is one of the products of a three-year collaborative research project. Supported by a Grant-in-Aid for Scientific Research from the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science, faculty members of the International Research Center for Japanese Studies (Nichibunken) in Kyoto joined with scholars from other institutions—primarily but not exclusively North American universities—during the academic and fiscal years 2000, 2001, and 2002, to examine the theme “Historiography and Japanese Consciousness of Values and Norms” in a number of symposia and workshops. Altogether more than seventy scholars made presentations or acted as discussants in six events over the course of the project. The present volume contains some of the work originally presented in our second year, and is the second publication to result from the project, following *Historiography and Japanese Consciousness of Values and Norms*, edited by Joshua A. Fogel and myself (Kyoto: International Research Center for Japanese Studies, 2003). Another book, *Historical Consciousness, Historiography, and Modern Japanese Values*, of which I am editor, is in the final stages of production as I write this foreword; it will bring together versions of research first offered in 2002.

Historiography as we took it for purposes of the inquiry in this project refers not only to the writing of history—although it certainly does denote that—but also to work in other media that incorporates history (or more precisely, versions or constructions of history). We wished to reconsider or in some instances to think anew about how historiography influences peoples’ senses of values. One of the defining characteristics of Nichibunken is that we attempt systematically to approach problems from interdisciplinary, comparative perspectives. Although only a few members of our faculty are historians by training and self-identification, it was fundamental to the conception of this project that we perceived that interest in history in Japan is high, and understanding of history figures in the identity-formation of a great many people, by no means only professional historians. Non-historians on our own faculty could, we felt sure, contribute to and themselves profit from participating in an examination of historiography and its influence, and we hoped that by getting together with scholars from overseas and from a few other institutions in Japan, we could discover things that would advance the state of learning and be of wide benefit. It may be unnecessary to state explicitly that history does not mean exclusively national history. In this project, we did not confine our notion of history to national stories or any other single type of account. This volume evidences our embrace of multiple types of history. The essays here are informed by a focus on the local more often than the national, for example. What they have in common is an interest, not always expressly articulated, in illuminating how history writing and folklore studies can interact.

*History and Folklore Studies in Japan* (Kyoto: International Research Center for Japanese Studies, 2006).

The idea for this project was Ishii Shirō's. At that time a professor at Nichibunken, he authored the proposal for funding and served as chairman of the committee that was responsible for planning and executing this Center's activities in the series of symposia and workshops. Toward the end of the first year of the project, Professor Ishii was appointed to a new position as an advisor to the prime minister of Japan on science and technology policy, and when he left Nichibunken I inherited his responsibilities for coordinating this inquiry into historiography. Without his vision and his energy, this book and the other two that I mentioned above would not have been possible, nor would have another work (at this moment still in progress, but very near completion, under the co-editorship of Professor Fogel and myself) entitled *Writing Histories in Japan: Texts and their Transformations from Ancient Times through the Meiji Era*, which is descended from a conference that he helped to co-organize with the Center for Japanese Studies at the University of Hawai'i in the fall of 2000.

The main event in year two of the historiography and values project was to have been a workshop at Princeton University. David Howell, who had been engaged in the initial discussions that laid the groundwork for this project in a workshop in Honolulu in September 1999 and had presented a paper at the Maui conference that yielded *Writing Histories in Japan*, consented to play the principal part in making arrangements. Thinking that a venue on the East Coast of the United States would be desirable for our academic year 2001 meeting, Professor Ishii and I and some of our Nichibunken colleagues had approached Professor Howell and Martin Collcutt in Maui and asked if we might meet on their campus. We readily reached agreement that we could work together. David proposed that we concentrate on approaches that combined history and the insights of folklore studies, and that we limit the scale of the meeting. From Nichibunken, Komatsu Kazuhiko (who later would become David's host when he spent a year here as a visiting scholar) consented to cooperate in selecting and inviting a few scholars who could make interesting contributions. We set November 29 and 30, 2001, as the dates for what people at Nichibunken soon dubbed the "Princeton Symposium." The East Asian Studies Program at Princeton was able to allocate some resources to ensure that this small conference be a successful one, covering some items of local expense that the JSPS funding was restricted from paying for.

Earthshaking global events occurred and upset our plans. Terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center in New York and the Pentagon in Washington, D.C., on September 11, 2001, and an outbreak of anthrax shortly thereafter when letters containing the anthrax bacteria—the first five of which were posted from Trenton, New Jersey, on September 18—were delivered to a number of news media organizations and two U.S. senators. Late in October, the Princeton post office was temporarily closed after an anthrax spore was discovered on a mail bin. Other terrorist attacks seemed imminently possible, and government entities and private organizations all over the United States scrambled to raise levels of alertness to danger. In these circumstances, it seemed risky to go forward according to our original schedule. Individually, some participants in this project might have taken the risk and gone on to Princeton in November, but the budget for this project came through the JSPS grant from the Japanese state, and as the institution receiving those funds and responsible for

carrying out the project, Nichibunken decided that the risk was unacceptable. It seemed most prudent to postpone. Rescheduling posed new logistical problems, and proved somewhat complicated.

In the end, the "Princeton Symposium" convened in Kyoto, at this Center, from January 15 through 17, 2002. Our sessions were bilingual, with some participants presenting in Japanese and others in English, and with discussion flowing in both languages. All of us, I think, will acknowledge that we did not exhaust the potential of the topic "History and Folklore Studies," but we felt that we had gained useful insights from each other, and we hope that readers will find interesting things in these pages, and will be stimulated to continue with the effort to exploit the mutually enhancing riches of these fields.

In addition to the authors whose work appears here, Director-General Yamaori Tetsuo of Nichibunken, Professor Martin Collcutt of Princeton, Professor Henry D. Smith II of Columbia University, Professor Inaga Shigemi of Nichibunken, and Professor Seki Kazutoshi of Kyushu University were present. Each of them offered valuable comments and questions in our discussions, and Professor Seki did a brilliant job of summarizing and contextualizing the individual presentations as we concluded. I am pleased to have this opportunity to thank them all sincerely for their contributions. I am glad also to be able to express appreciation once again to our authors. Deepest gratitude is due to David Howell for his many efforts as co-organizer, author, and editor, to Komatsu Kazuhiko for his work as co-organizer of this workshop and author, and to the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science, which made this project possible.